

A Guide for Parents

Protecting Your Working Teen



WORK

is a valuable experience for many teenagers. It can give teens needed money, skills, and self-confidence. It should also be a safe and healthy experience. Sometimes, however, work has risks. A job can affect a teen's schoolwork. Also, teens are more likely than adults to get hurt at work, even in places that seem safe. Some 200,000 U.S. teens are injured at work every year. One-third of these are hurt badly enough to visit the hospital emergency room. Injuries at work should not be considered "part of the job." Most injuries can and should be prevented.

Employers, young workers, and parents all have roles to play in ensuring that work is a positive, safe experience. Many teens say that they want their parents to help them with job-related issues.

This brochure gives you information about:

- health and safety risks to teen workers
- how to help your teen with a problem at work
- the laws and agencies that protect teen workers



Working too many hours or too late can be harmful.

Before the holidays, all the kids fell asleep in class because they had to work late at night. If you work till 11 and then come home and start your homework, you're going to be tired.

—16-year-old student

- Studies have shown that teens who work more than 20 hours a week do not do as well in school as those who work fewer hours.
- Teachers report that teens who work late at night are less alert in class and less prepared.
- Young people who work long hours may not have time for after-school activities.

Child labor laws limit the total number of hours teens can work and the times they are allowed to work. These laws are listed on page 10 of this brochure.

Teens can get hurt in a variety of workplaces.

I cut the tip of my finger off. The reason for this was that the machine I was using was broken, and I was forced to use my hand instead of the tool that pushed the vegetables down into the food processor. The only training I ever had on this machine was how to turn the machine itself on and how to make the salads look pretty.

—15-year-old worker in a fast-food restaurant



Retail stores

Cuts from box cutters
Lifting boxes
Falling from ladders

Grocery stores

Cuts from box cutters
Lifting boxes and bags
Using chemical cleaners
Repetitive motions, such as using the scanner and putting bags in carriages
Slipping on wet floors

Fast-food restaurants

Slipping on wet or greasy floors
Cuts from knives
Burns from stoves, grills, or hot grease
Using chemical cleaners

Construction and painting

Cuts from tools
Noise from power tools
Exposure to lead from paint removal
Working in very hot or cold temperatures
Falling from ladders
Breathing or touching chemicals, such as paint thinner or insulation

Nursing homes and hospitals

Lifting patients
Using chemical cleaners
Burns, cuts, and slips from working in the kitchen
Working in hot laundry rooms and kitchens

Landscaping

Exposure to pesticides
Using mowers
Cuts from tools
Working in hot weather

Gas stations

Breathing gasoline vapors and exhaust
Working in very hot or cold temperatures
Working near moving cars and trucks

All workplaces

Assaults, especially when working alone and at night
Stress due to angry customers, working alone,
or not knowing how to do the job
Sexual and other forms of harassment



Many of the tasks and jobs listed here are illegal for 14 and 15 year olds, and some may be illegal for 16 and 17 year olds as well. Pages 11 and 12 of this brochure list many tasks and jobs teen workers are prohibited from doing.

► HERE ARE SOME STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO HELP YOUR TEEN STAY SAFE AT WORK.

- ✓ Know the child labor laws and make sure your teen knows them.

Child labor laws protect working youth. The agencies that can give you more information about these laws are listed on pages 13 and 14 of this brochure.

Keep in mind that child labor laws provide a basic level of protection, but do not cover all risks at work. There are other protections that will keep your teen safer on the job.



Talk with your teen about his or her job.

Many teens do not know what can put them at risk on the job. You can help your teen start to think about workplace safety.

ASK ABOUT

Tasks:

What tasks is your teen asked to do? Could any of these tasks cause an injury? For example, is he or she asked to lift heavy objects? Work alone at night? Use chemical cleaners?

Training:

Has your teen been trained to do assigned tasks safely? Is he or she trained before being asked to do a new task? Is she or he trained to deal with difficult customers?

The workplace itself:

Are there hazards in the workplace, such as slippery floors? Locked or blocked exit doors? Machines without safety guards? Crowded workspaces? Has your teen been told how to report hazards?

The supervisor:

Is the supervisor always nearby? Does he or she listen to employees' concerns and encourage questions? Is your teen comfortable talking to the supervisor?

Safety equipment:

Does the job require goggles, gloves, special shoes, or other safety equipment? If so, does your teen have and use this equipment?

✓ Set limits on hours.

If your teen is overtired or having trouble keeping up with schoolwork, he or she may be working too many hours. Help your teen reduce his or her work hours.

✓ Help your teen with problems at work.

If your teen has concerns about hours or safety at work, encourage him or her to answer the following questions:



What do you want the supervisor to do or change?

For example: I want to work no more than three hours on school days. I want help lifting heavy boxes.

Why do you want the supervisor to make this change?

For example: So I can keep up with my schoolwork. So I won't get hurt.

Whose help do you want?

For example: I'd feel more comfortable approaching the boss with some of my coworkers. I'd like my parents to come with me when I meet with the boss.

How will you talk to your supervisor about the change you want and why you want it?

(Remember, the goal is to make a change, and keep your job.)

For example: Can I make an appointment to talk with you about a problem I'm having? Lifting boxes is hurting my back. I'd like to work out another way to get the job done.

Be aware of signs that your teen is unhappy at work.

Sometimes young workers find it difficult to discuss problems such as sexual harassment or workplace stress. Your teen may need your encouragement in talking about these issues and your help in finding solutions.

If changes related to health, safety, or work hours are not made, you or your teen can contact one of the agencies listed on pages 13 and 14 of this brochure for help.

✓ Let your teen know that he or she has the right to:

- a safe and healthful workplace
- at least minimum wage
- payment for all hours worked
- protection from hazardous tasks
- working hours that are within the limits of the child labor laws

It is against the law for an employer to fire or otherwise penalize a worker for exercising his or her rights.

**Maine and
federal child labor
laws are in place
to protect teens.**

Child labor laws cover all youth until they are 18 years old but are strictest for those under 16.

Child labor laws protect teens' education by limiting the time they can work.

Laws cover the times of day and the total number of hours per day and per week teens can work.

Child labor laws protect teens' health and safety by preventing them from working in hazardous jobs or doing dangerous tasks.



Information about work permits

In Maine, youths under 16 must get a permit from school each time they work in a new place.

Check with the school department in your city or town to find out where to get a permit. The high school guidance counselor or job placement coordinator may also be of help.



Legal Work Hours for Teens

14 and 15 Year Olds

- **Work Hours**
Not before 7:00 AM or after 7:00 PM during the school year
Not during school hours
Between 7:00 AM and 9:00 PM during the summer
- **Maximum Hours When School Is in Session**
18 hours a week
3 hours a day on school days, including Fridays
No more than 6 days in a row
- **Maximum Hours When School Is Not in Session**
40 hours a week
8 hours a day
No more than 6 days in a row

16 and 17 Year Olds

(Enrolled in school, including home-schoolers)

- **Work Hours**
Not before 7:00 AM on a school day
Not before 5:00 AM on a non-school day
Not after 10:00 PM the night before a school day
Not after midnight on a day that does not precede a school day
- **Maximum Hours When School Is in Session**
20 hours a week
28 hours in a week with unscheduled school closure (such as snow days)
4 hours a day on a school day
8 hours a day on last day of school week or an unscheduled school closure day
No more than 6 days in a row
- **Maximum Hours When School Is Not in Session**
50 hours a week
10 hours a day
No more than 6 days in a row

Prohibited Tasks for Teens

In Maine, no one under 18 years old may do work that involves:

Driving a vehicle or forklift for work (except on a farm)

Using meat slicers or power-driven bakery machines

Handling, serving, or selling alcoholic beverages (call Bureau of Liquor Enforcement at 624-8745 for exceptions)

Using a circular saw, a band saw, a guillotine shears, or a box crusher

Using power-driven woodworking machines

Exposure to radioactive substances

Using power-driven paper-products machines

Using power-driven metal-forming, punching, or shearing machines

Manufacturing brick, tile, or kindred products

Manufacturing explosives or storing explosives

Working in wrecking, demolition, shipbreaking, or excavation

Mining, logging, or sawmilling

Using a power-driven hoisting apparatus

Slaughtering, packing, or processing meat

Roofing or railway operations

Working in foundries or around blast furnaces

Manufacturing hazardous products such as phosphorous matches

Working as a firefighter or engineer on a boat

Any work that is determined by the Maine Department of Labor to be dangerous to the health and well-being of minors

NOTE: This is not a complete list. The Maine Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division (207-624-6410) can tell you if the work your teen is doing is legal.

Also, remember that workplaces have many hazards that are not covered by child labor laws.

No one under 16 years old may do work that involves:

Any work in a manufacturing facility (i.e., a factory)*

Using any power-driven machinery (except machines in offices, retail stores, and food service, as well as gasoline pumps)

Baking

Cooking (except at soda fountains, lunch counters, snack bars, or cafeteria serving counters)

Working in freezers or meat coolers

Working in construction, transportation, communications, or public utilities

Working in warehouses (except clerical work)

Loading or unloading trucks, railroad cars, or conveyors

Working on ladders or scaffolds

Washing windows in a public or commercial building if the windowsill is more than 10 feet above the ground

Working in places of amusement

Laundering in a commercial laundry or dry-cleaning establishment

Working in a pool room, billiard room, or bowling alley

Working as a public messenger

Any processing operations (as in meat, fish, or poultry processing, or cracking nuts)*

Working around boilers or in engine rooms

Doing industrial homework (i.e., piecework at home)

Any of the occupations prohibited for all minors under the age of 18

No one under 14 may hold a job.

There are exceptions, such as jobs as newspaper carriers, farmworkers, and entertainers.

*Except in office, retail, or customer service/sales areas, in a separate room away from manufacturing or processing operations, or outside in non-hazardous work on the grounds.

..... You can get help from these agencies and organizations

- For questions about wages or child labor laws, call:

Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Standards, Wage and Hour Division (enforces state child labor laws) (207) 624-6410 web site: <http://janus.state.me.us/labor>

U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division (enforces federal child labor laws) (207) 780-3344 or (207) 945-0330 web site: <http://www.dol.gov>

- For questions about workplace health and safety, call:

SafetyWorks! Maine Department of Labor (207) 624-6400 or 1-877-SAFE-345
web site: <http://janus.state.me.us/labor/>

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

Portland Office (207) 780-3178

Bangor Office (207) 941-8177

web site: <http://www.osha.gov>

Young Workers Safety and Health Network

web site: <http://www.stw.ed.gov/youngworkers/index.htm>

- For questions about discrimination at work, call:

Maine Human Rights Commission (207) 624-6050

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) (617) 565-3200 or
1-800-669-4000

- For questions about workers' compensation, call:

Maine Workers' Compensation Board (207) 287-2308

Local Offices

Augusta 1-800-400-6854

Caribou 1-800-400-6855

Bangor 1-800-400-6856

Lewiston 1-800-400-6857

Portland 1-800-400-6858

web site: <http://janus.state.me.us/wcb/>

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Occupational Health Surveillance Program

and

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55 Chapel St.
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For more information about safety and health or
labor laws in Maine, call the Maine Department
of Labor at 207-624-6400, or toll-free
1-877-SAFE-345.



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